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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Rural Teaching Effectiveness Network, created to overcome difficulties associated with offering staff development experiences in rural Maryland. The long distances often required to attend staff development activities can discourage rural teachers' commitment. Similar problems exist in creating standards of professional practice in teacher education programs. The goals of the Teaching Effectiveness Network (TEN) include encouraging continuity between higher education courses and school experiences, promoting teacher education research, and improving supervision. The TEN consists of collaborative teams of staff specialists from the Maryland State Department of Education, institutions of higher education, and local school system personnel. Week-long summer institutes and workshops were conducted to generate network cooperation in rural areas. By the TEN's third year, participants were responsible for coordinating the summer institute, providing presentations, and serving as mentors in local programs for lower-level participants. TEN uses as its core content the Mastery Teaching principles developed and packaged by Madeline Hunter (1982). Since initiation of the TEN in 1984, two universities have incorporated the effective teaching principles into their preservice and graduate programs. Participation of teachers has consistently increased and evaluative data suggest a positive response from participants. For rural school systems with comparable resources, the structure and strategy of the network is replicative. A large capital investment is not required, but a willingness to allow educators time to communicate and collaborate is imperative. (TES)

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Recent research demonstrates an array of effective teaching behaviors that positively influence academic achievement. Their inclusion in the repertoire of classroom teachers has become the purview of staff development specialists, supervisors of instruction, state department personnel, and university faculty. School systems have developed training activities to encourage teachers to become competent at employing these skills.

Providing staff development experiences for rural areas generally and in effective teaching skills specifically is an undertaking with unique difficulties and challenges. Large, sparsely populated areas, with remote schools that require teachers to travel long distances to attend staff development activities often discourage commitment and undermine the creation of standard practice within rural systems. The uniqueness of the schools often encourages teachers to see their problems in a singular fashion that discourages strong feelings of esprit de corps.

Similar problems in creating commitment to standards of professional practice exist in teacher education programs. Furthermore, teaching experiences required of preservice teachers reveal obvious strengths but numerous weaknesses (Griffin, 1983). Preservice teaching experiences are generally:

a) judged as satisfying and comfortable
b) dominated by supervising teachers
c) focused on immediate how-to information
d) poorly linked to campus courses
e) weak in their reinforcement of effective teaching principles
f) undemanding in requiring students to reflect on the connection of teaching principles to learning.

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With these considerations in mind, the Rural Teaching Effectiveness Network was created to serve the most rural area of Maryland, the Eastern Shore. The area is located on the Delmarva Peninsula which is geographically separated from large east coast population centers by the Chesapeake Bay, primarily agrarian, and except for seasonal resort areas, sparsely populated.

Background and Purpose

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) as the agency responsible for the approval of teacher education programs, continuing education activities, and teacher certification, through a review of its activities and a needs assessment, identified as a priority the creation of a teaching effectiveness network. The network consists of staff specialists from MSDE, institutions of higher education, and local school system personnel who serve on collaborative teams. The teams represent regions throughout the state. Each serve the populations represented within their area and design activities to meet their individual needs. The basic purpose of the Teaching Effectiveness Network (TEN) is to present and encourage the employment of teaching effectiveness principles within the systems traditionally responsible for the preparation and inservice training of teachers. This purpose is accomplished through collaboration between staff development specialists from the state department of education, personnel from the local education agencies, and faculty from institutions of higher eduction (Murphy, 1985).

The TEN goals are:

a) to encourage continuity between campus courses and school experiences
b) to promote research based teacher education
c) to encourage the use of effective teaching principles
d) to establish and employ a common vocabulary about teaching
e) to improve supervision

These goals are achieved through summer week-long institutes and follow-up workshops conducted during the school year. These activities are described in yearly action plans which are developed by local teams. The cooperative endeavors generate from existing personnel cadres of professionals that become a resource to their school system and the rural areas they serve.

Strategy and Structure

The initial strategy was to recruit personnel from MSDE, IHEs, and schools who would be involved in the first summer training institute (see Table 1). MSDE personnel were identified from those who served as staff development specialist within the established state regions, IHE faculty from those who taught methods courses and supervised clinical experiences, and, school system personnel from staff development specialists and principals. Teams of individuals representing each of these groups were formed within each region. The initial training was completed, action plans were developed and roles were assigned to each team member (see Table 2).

Insert Table 1 & 2 about here

MSDE personnel encouraged collaboration between the schools and IHEs and supported principals and school staff development specialists as they recruited teachers from their respective schools. Faculty acted as change agents within their individual departments. They reviewed the TEN content and its research base with colleagues, recruited faculty for future activities, revised course content and field practica, participated in peer teaching activities, and cooperatively conducted staff development activities with school personnel.

The second summer institute was offered in the rural school systems. Levels of participation which refer to levels of training and years of experience with TEN were identified. Level II participants, all those trained in the first summer, refined specific skills, participated in coaching activities, and trained new participants from each of the represented organizations. Level I participants, were prepared through lecture, demonstration, and peer teaching to employ the effective teaching skills which were presented to Level II participants in the previous summer. Within the school systems, TEN schools were identified. These schools served as practica sites. The teachers and preservice students assigned to them throughout the following year employed effective teaching principles, participated in peer teaching, cooperated in coaching activities, and video-taped demonstration lessons and supervisory conferences.

In the third year, Level III participants were responsible for coordinating the summer institute, providing presentations for both Level I and Level II participants, and serving as

mentors in county induction programs. Levels I and II, during the summer institute and in the following year, completed the activities previously described for the appropriate level.

After the third summer institute, participants complete the basic core content, but because of the success and interest in the project and new state training initiatives, additional content for Level IV and Level V participants was added during the fourth and fifth summer of 1987 and 1988, respectively. Level IV participants were provided advanced training in coaching and supervision in 1987; Level V participants in 1988 completed training in the use of a classroom observation instrument.

Content

Teaching effectiveness principles have been described by notable authors (Anderson, Evertson, & Brophy, 1982; Good & Grouws, 1979; Emmer, Evertson, Sanford, & Clements, 1982) and training procedures have been designed and validated in research projects that have been carried out within public schools (Good & Grouws, 1979; Fitzpatrick, 1981; Becker, 1977). Consequently, there are a variety of resources which can be employed. TEN employs as its core content the Mastery Teaching principles that have been developed and packaged by Madeline Hunter (1982).

Hunter's (1982) work has broad appeal and is well received by teachers. Her view of teaching as "a constant stream of professional decisions made before, during and after interaction with the students " (p.3), accurately describes the process that occurs in most classrooms and reflects empathetic understanding of teachers' power to influence achievement. Additionally, it employs a vocabulary which accurately describes specific teaching procedures and processes with which diverse educators establish easy rapport. The material is well organized, logically presented, and easily used with individuals or groups. These considerations are particulary important for rural schools where staff developed activities are often inhibited by small numbers of participants, travel difficulties, and isolation and where resources are limited.

Hunter (1982) stresses that Mastery Teaching is a compilation of research on teaching and learning presented in a fashion that allows teachers to know "what you are doing when you teach, why you are doing what you do, and do that consciously and

deliberately to increase your students' learning" (p. ix, 1982). Topics included in the core TEN content are: a) decisions in teaching, b) motivation, c) providing information effectively, d) teaching to both halves of the brain, e) modeling, f) guiding practice, g) teaching for transfer, h) checking for understanding and i) effective lesson design. Because TEN employs teams to carry out cooperative action plans, the specific and confined content is an asset.

Participants complete Mastery Teaching content in their third year of the project. Levels IV and V completed in the fourth and fifth year provide opportunities to develop additional skills. Level IV provides experiences that develop the coaching and supervisory skills described by Joyce and Showers (1982). The skills are particularly important for participants who supervise students from cooperating IHEs or serve as mentors in county based induction programs. Level V presents the Maryland Classroom Observation Inventory (MCOI) and assists teachers as they employ it in their schools. The MCOI describes in four domains, planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and teacher-learner interaction, effective teaching principles which were validated by Research for Better Schools. The 45 succinct statements of behavior support the content presented in Levels I-III. Participants are encouraged to use the MCOI in describing teaching episodes of beginning and experienced teachers as they become involved in local school based training initiatives and TEN. The use of the MCOI allows participating teachers to specify strengths and weaknesses in their teaching repertoire as they begin to employ the Mastery Teaching Procedures.

Results

Since the initiation of the Teaching Effectiveness Network in 1984, positive results have been consistently reported. Both institutions, Salisbury State University (SSU) and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES), have incorporated the effective teaching principles into their preservice and graduate programs. Collective student enrollment since 1985 in courses which stress effective teaching principles exceeds 600. Participation of teachers has consistently increased. Upon completion of the 1988 summer institute, 225 teachers from two counties, Wicomico and Worcester, had become involved in the Network.

A review of the evaluation process demonstrates the overall positive response to the content from preservice teachers. Three evaluative measures were employed: (a) the "Course and Instructor Evaluation" which was developed by SSU, (b) the IDEA Report (1976), a nationally tested course/instructor evaluation developed by the Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development in Higher Education, and (c) a five item open-ended narrative form. The overall outcome of the evaluation can best be demonstrated by reviewing the results of a specific methods course, "Principles of Secondary Education".

The "Course and Instructor Evaluation" asks students to respond to 12 items that evaluate instructor teaching style, level of difficulty, and content. Of those items, one, "This course is helping me become more effective in my profession, or in preparation for my profession", asks students to relate the content with their professional goals. Of the respondents, 93% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

The IDEA Report allows students to identify course objectives as either being "important" or "essential" to their professional goals. Of the objectives selected to describe effective teaching principles, all were considered essential, except one which was considered important.

Responses from the open-ended narrative form were grouped according to "descriptors" (Wolinski, 1987). Comments relating to course content, include:

> This course provided me with knowledge about the fundamentals of effective teaching so that I now feel far more confident about my student teaching experience. (p. 4)
>
> This course provided me with so much knowledge on how to conduct a class. Things that I was unsure of before, I now have a solid idea of what to do, and how to do it. (p. 5)

Sample comments that pertain to "feeling more confident" are:

> As a result of this course, I now feel more confident about teaching as well as in my "mastery" of teaching skills.(p. 5)

> I have new-found confidence in my ability to teach. This course has definitely increased the likelihood that learning will take place in my classroom. (p. 5)

Comments were also made concerning the modeling process and practice activities that are encouraged within the Network:

> The instructor in this course is an example of "practicing what you preach," or more accurately, "what you teach". The principles that he teaches are principles that he uses. (p. 6)

> You learn principles and you "see" their application. (p. 6).

Observations indicate that preservice teachers employ the effective teaching principles during their supervised teaching experience (Garigliano, 1986). Data analyzed during 150 lessons, described on the summary form "Teaching Effectiveness Notes: A Coaching-Conference Guide" demonstrate consistent and successful transfer from methods courses to supervised teaching. Preservice teachers consistently employed nine effective teaching principles: (a) planning lessons, (b) getting the class ready to learn, (c) letting the class know the "what" and "why" of the lesson, (d) employing teaching methods and strategies, (e) providing models, (f) using audiovisual aids, (g) checking for understanding, (h) guiding practice, and (i) managing the classroom. Of equal importance, the observations indicated that the students confidently employed the principles early in the experience and demonstrated diverse methods and activities in their teaching.

Evaluations from teachers who have participated in TEN have been consistently positive. Their willingness to attend the training sessions, their involvement as presenters, cooperating teachers, and mentors within county based induction programs are testimony to their belief in the project and their dedication to effective teaching principles.

Interview data were collected from a representative sample (N=63) which included IHE faculty, principals, and classroom teachers from five project sites. Consistently positive responses were made regarding: (a) usefulness of the project for participants, (b) needs cited by participants related to the

project, (c) ways in which teaching effectiveness principles/ ideas were used, taught, or disseminated, (d) participant's viewpoints about the model, and (e) training support for the project. Particular strengths noted during the interviews were the practicality of the project, the common language used to describe the effective teaching principles, the emphasis on principles of learning, and lesson design. Participants were critical of the model because it tended to be seen as a panacea, it excluded other teaching approaches, and it encouraged preservice teachers to be preoccupied with student motivation (Christensen, 1986).

Discussion

The Teaching Effectiveness Network offers a collaborative process to teacher education that allows rural areas to meet diverse staff development needs. Its inclusion of state department of education staff development specialists, LEA personnel and IHE faculty on teams encourages regions to collectively respond to training and staffing needs in a manner that multiplies training effects. The outcomes have been consistently positive. Teachers, preservice students, and faculty, as a result of being included in the planning, delivery, and assessment process, demonstrate a commitment to effective teaching principles that in the past have been poorly articulated and inconsistently practiced.

For rural school systems with comparable resources, the structure and strategy of the network described here is replicative. A large capital investment is not required; a willingness to allow educators the time to communicate and collaborate is, however, imperative. The outcome can be the creation of a well trained cadre of professionals who are committed to high standards of instruction that encourage achievement.

Table 1

The TEN Implementation Strategy

>TEAMS>-------->-------->TEAMS>---------->------->TEAMS>

PHASE I	PHASE II	PHASE III
Propositional (the what)	Procedural (the how)	Conditional (apply and refine)
Identify principles and vocabulary	Practice in teaching	Refine principles
Develop faculty skills	Teach/supervise students	Teach/supervise others
Clarify roles responsibilities	Improve communication and planning	Develop new roles
Assess process	Assess process and faculty progress	Assess process and student/faculty progress

Table 2

Ten Participant Collaborative Activities

State Department Personnel	LEA Personnel	Faculty
Complete initial TEN training	Complete initial TEN training	Complete initial TEN training
Encourage cooperation between teams	Recruit participants	Recruit participants
Recruit participants	Demonstrate effective teaching principles	Demonstrate effective teaching principles
Coordinate state level activities	Video-tape their teaching episodes for self-evaluation and coaching purposes	Video-tape their teaching episodes for self-evaluation and coaching purposes
	Video-tape coaching and supervisory sessions	Video-tape coaching and supervisory sessions
	Participate in peer teaching and coaching within their schools	Revise course content to stress effective teaching principles
	Cooperatively plan teacher education field practica with colleagues and IHE faculty	Cooperatively plan teacher education field practica with colleagues and LEA personnel
	Serve as cooperating teachers for IHEs	Revise field activitie to stress effective teaching principles

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